The 144,000 and the Great Multitude

Ekkehardt Mueller

Introduction

The number 144,000 is one of several apparently cryptic numbers of Revelation that has caused much speculation. Generations of Christians including Adventists have studied this symbol. In the past, the Biblical Research Institute has already published an article on the 144,000 and the Great Multitude by Beatrice Neill.1[1] The present article is an attempt by its author to deal with the biblical information. When addressing this topic the following questions must be addressed: What kind of group are the 144,000? When do they appear? In which relation do they stand to the great multitude and the remnant? Is it a literal or figurative number?

I. The 144,000 as a Group

In Scripture the 144,000 appear under this designation only twice, namely in Rev 7 and in Rev 14. They are a specific group of human beings which maintain a special relationship with Jesus. In Rev 14:1 they are standing with the Lamb, Jesus, on Mt. Zion. Those, who have been condemned and have been persecuted in chap.13, now triumph with the Lamb.1[2] Instead of the mark of the beast on their foreheads or their hands these people bear the name of the Lamb and of the Father on their foreheads. They belong to God. He keeps them. They resemble Him. They sing a new song, a song of their personal experience, which they went through in the final battle between truth and error, God and Satan. Even though they were unable to buy or sell (13:17), Jesus has bought them. Salvation was expensive. It cost Jesus' life.

The 144,000 have not defiled themselves with women. They are virgins. This means that they have not entered into a relationship with false religion or they have separated themselves from it.1[3] They follow Jesus every step of the way (cf. John 10:27-28) and are transformed through God's grace. As the first fruits they are a special group of children of God. According to the context of Rev 14 they have accepted the three angels' messages and may also have proclaimed them. In Rev 14:12 the saints are another name for the 144,000. These saints are characterized by endurance/patience, keeping of the commandments, and faith of Jesus. Thus, Rev 14 furnishes information on their character and behavior.

Rev 7, however, contains little in this respect. We hear that the 144,000 are God's servants who are going to be sealed (Rev 7:3). The seal of God on their foreheads points to the fact that they are God's property and that they are at least protected from apostasy.1[4]

II. The Time of Their Appearance and Ministry

Although the 144,000 are already presented on Mt. Zion, their acceptance of and obvious involvement in the proclamation of the three angels' message, which takes

place immediately before Christ's Second Advent, make it clear that they are God's end time people.

The same is true when we take a look at Rev 7. The sixth seal contains the heavenly signs of Jesus' Second Coming (6:12-14) and the Day of Lord, which is the Second Advent (6:14-16). The chapter ends with the question: "Who can stand before it?" (6:17). The previous verses (6:15-16) portray people who are not able to survive the day of the wrath of God and the lamb. On the other hand, Rev 7 points to people who are able to stand. Thus, Rev 7 responds to the question of 6:17 telling us that the 144,000 will be able to stand (7:1-8). The great multitude (7:9-17) is already depicted as serving God in heaven, in his heavenly sanctuary before his throne (7:15). The 144,000 are found in connection with the Second Advent prior to the time when the saints will be with God in heaven. Again as in Rev 14, the 144,000 of Rev 7 are God's end time people, apparently those who will be alive when Jesus returns to take his children home.

III. The 144,000 and the Great Multitude

Opinions vary on the relationship between the great multitude and the 144,000. The two groups could be distinct from each other; the 144,000 could be a part of the great multitude; or the 144,000 and the great multitude could be one group appearing under different names.1[5] The arguments for the latter option seem to be the most convincing. Obviously, the 144,000 and the great multitude, which will be found before the throne of God in his sanctuary, refer to the same group.1[6]

1. In Rev 5 God has a scroll in his hand which initially nobody is worthy to open. While John weeps, an elder tells him (5:5) that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus, has overcome and is able to open the scroll. John hears about the lion1[7] but when in 5:6 he takes a look, he does not see a lion but a lamb. Jesus the Lion is Jesus the Lamb.1[8] This phenomenon is found in the introductory scene of the seal vision. It is repeated in the same vision, in chapter 7. In 7:4 John hears the number of the sealed, but in 7:9 he sees that the 144,000 that were sealed form a great multitude. The 144,000 and the great multitude are the same group portrayed from different perspectives. The first designation is a symbolical term, the latter describes reality.
2. The answer to the question of who will be able to stand (6:17) is provided by the entire seventh chapter. Both depictions of a group, the 144,000 and the great multitude are those who are able to stand and point to the same group.
3. The 144,000 are introduced as an immediate answer to the question of 6:17. They are not further described, and the consequence of being able to stand on the great day of the wrath is not shown in Rev 7a, but only in Rev 7b. However, the great multitude receives a more detailed description and is depicted as standing before God. The same term "to stand" is used in 6:17 and 7:9.
4. The 144,000 as well as the great multitude have to go through difficult times. The 144,000 are sealed before the winds blow and have to stand the succeeding difficulties. The great multitude has come out of the great tribulation.

5. The 144,000 are God's end time church on earth. The great multitude is the end time church in heaven. The 144,000 are God's militant end time church. The great multitude is God's triumphant end time church.
6. The 144,000 are the fullness of God's end time church, twelve times twelve times thousand. This number reminds us of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Lamb (21:12,14). The number thousand may point to a military unit in the Israel of old (Num 31:4-6). Thus, the 144,000 represent the church militant of the end times.1[9] The great multitude is the consummated end time church. The information on the great multitude complements what was lacking with the 144,000. The sealing of the 144,000 would be incomplete if it would not lead to the final consummation as depicted by the experience of the great multitude.
7. The 144,000 are "servants of our God" (7:3). The great multitude "serves" God (7:15). Both Greek terms are used for the same group in 22:3.

It seems to be best to understand the 144,000 and the great multitude as the same group viewed from different perspectives. The great multitude does not comprise the redeemed ones of all ages. This is not the focus in Rev 7, nor is it denied that there will be saved ones from all ages. In fact this is implied in 14:4 by calling the 144,000 the first fruits. There is going to be a universal harvest of the redeemed ones from all ages past.

IV. The Great Multitude and the Remnant

The central vision of Rev focuses in a special way on the church. Whereas Rev 12 starts with the early church, stresses the church during the medieval period, and introduces the end time remnant. The following two chapters focus specifically on the end time people of God and their fate.

Rev 12:17 talks about the remnant. Rev 13:1-10 follows and mentions the saints which are not involved in universal false worship. Rev 13:11-18, knows about a group not mentioned by a specific name that does not accept the mark of the beast and does not worship the beast or its image. In spite of the universal boycott and the death decree aimed at God's faithful remnant, there is a group of survivors, who live with Jesus, the 144,000 of Rev 14. Obviously the remnant, the saints, those who do not receive the mark of the beast and do not worship the beast and its image, and the 144,000 are the very same group. The passages are linked linguistically and structurally.1[10]

The phrase "to make war with/against" is found in Rev 12:17 and in 13:7. In 12:17 the war is waged against the remnant. In 13:7 war is waged against the saints. Apparently, the remnant of 12:17 and the saints of 13:7 describe the same group.1[11] Whereas the sea beast reflects the beasts of Dan 7, the saints of Rev 13 remind us of the saints found in Dan 7.1[12] Although the saints in Rev 13 seem to describe the end time remnant, nevertheless, they are the continuation of the saints throughout Christian history as the remnant is the offspring and continuation of the woman of Rev 12.

Rev 12:17, Rev 13:10, and Rev 14:12 are interwoven and describe the main characteristics of the remnant appearing under different names.

Rev 12:17
Keep the commandments
Testimony of Jesus

Rev 13:10
Patience
Faith

Rev 14:12
Keep the commandments
Patience
Faith of Jesus

V. Summary of the characteristics of the 144,000

If it is true that the 144,000 and the remnant are the same group, then the characteristics of the 144,000 mentioned in 14:1-5 are additional characteristics of the remnant, and the characteristics of the remnant apply also to the 144,000.

1. *Keeping the commandments* (12:17; 14:12)
   The remnant keeps the commandments of God and thus demonstrates their love and loyalty toward their Lord. The most prominent of the commandments, next to the commandment to love God and your neighbor, are the Ten Commandments. In the introductory scene to the central vision of the Apocalypse (11:19) the Ark of the Covenant already pointed indirectly to them. The observance of the commandments of God includes the keeping of the biblical Sabbath anchored in the fourth commandment.
2. *Testimony of Jesus* (12:17)
   The remnant has the testimony of Jesus. According to 19:10 this is the "spirit of prophecy," the Holy Spirit that speaks through the gift of prophecy. In the parallel text Rev 22:9 the word "prophets" replaces the phrase testimony of Jesus." The remnant lift up God's Word and genuine manifestations of the gift of prophecy (1Cor 12:7-11; Eph 4:11) including the book of Revelation that comes from Jesus and in which Jesus testifies about Himself.1[13]
3. *Patience* (13:10; 14:12)
   The remnant is characterized by patience or perseverance. In difficult times, they do not give up, do not let go their relationship with God, and do not lose their hope in Jesus' return that will take place soon.
4. *Faith* (13:10; 14:12)
   Rev 13:10 talks about the faith of the saints. In Rev 14:12 the remnant are identified by faith in/of Jesus. Of course, saints have faith in Jesus, and some interpreters understand this expression in this way.1[14] Others suggest translating the phrase as "the faith of Jesus" and understand it to reflect the Christian doctrine as contained in the New Testament. In any case, the remnant holds on to Jesus and His doctrines faithfully.
5. *Property of God and Jesus* (14:1, 3-4)
   (a) Names of Jesus and the Father on the forehead (14:1)
   (b) Purchased (14:3-4)
   (c) First fruits (14:4)

6. *No false worship* (14:4)
   (a) Not defiled with women (14:4)
   (b) Virgins (14:4)
7. *Followers of the lamb* (14:4)
8. *Truthfulness and blamelessness like sacrificial animals* (14:5)
   (a) Without a lie (14:5)
   (b) Without a blemish (14:5)1[15]
9. *Worldwide proclamation of the three angels' messages* (14:6-12)
   This includes:
   (a) Proclamation of the eternal gospel (14:6)
   (b) Call to worship God by fearing and honoring Him (14:7)
   (c) Announcement of the judgment (14:7)
   (d) Worship of the Creator (14:7, 9-11)
   (e) Appeal to separate from Babylon (14:8)1[16]

VI. A Symbolic Number?

It is now quite clear that the 144,000 must be understood in a symbolic way rather than in a literal way.

The immediate context is clearly symbolic (7:1-3) mentioning the four corners of the world, the four winds of the earth, sea, earth, trees, and the seal of God. But also the extended context, namely Rev 6 is largely symbolic, for instance, the apocalyptic riders and the martyrs under the altar. The parallel passage in 14:1-5 must be understood symbolically. It tells us that the 144,000 "have not defiled themselves with women." They are "virgins" and follow the "Lamb." The group does not consist of unmarried men only. The term "woman" is a symbol in Rev as is the term "Lamb." Therefore, symbolic language is also to be expected for 7:4-8. The number is symbolic—12 times 12 times 1,000—and points to the fullness of the people of God. The enumeration of tribes is very unusual. The tribe Dan is missing, whereas Manasses should already be contained in Joseph. Ephraim is not mentioned, however, Levi is counted.1[17] Judah is found in the first place and Benjamin in the last, forming a parenthesis which encompasses the tribes of the Northern Kingdom.1[18] Such a list is not found elsewhere in Scripture. Most of the twelve tribes no longer exist today. Therefore, it is hardly possible to find 144,000 literal Israelites according to their tribes as listed in Rev 7 forming God's end time people. However, the NT knows descendants of Abraham that are not literal descendants (Rom 4:11-12) as well as a spiritual Israel (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:16).

Conclusion

Scripture portrays the 144,000 as God's special end time church. According to Rev 7 they are able "to stand" when Jesus returns. They are called "first fruits" which indicates that a larger harvest will be gathered and that they are not the only ones to be saved. Since they have followed the Lamb wherever it went and since they have not joined false worship they will be with Jesus on Mt. Zion and before the throne of God in

his heavenly sanctuary. We may not be able to solve all the questions related to the 144,000 and probably this is not so important either. More important is to live in such a way that we may be counted among them.

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[1]. Beatrice S. Neall, "Sealed Saints and the Tribulation," in *Symposium on Revelation--Book I: Introductory and Exegetical Studies,* ed. F. B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 245-278.
[2].Cf., Eduard Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, NTD 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 84, who labels Zion as the place of end time preservation.
[3]. Cf. the woman in chap. 12 and the harlot in chap.17, Jezebel in 2:20, furthermore, 2:14 and 18:2.4.
[4]. See, Eze 9:4.
[5]. See, e.g., the great number of names, titles, and symbolic descriptions used for God the Father, Jesus, and the church in Rev.
[6]. See, for example, Richard Bauckham, "The List of the Tribes in Revelation 7 Again," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 42 (1991): 102-103; R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*,2 vols, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1920), 1:201; J. Comblin, "L'Épître (Ap 7, 2-12): Le rassemblement de l'Israel de Dieu," *Assemblées du Seigneur: Catechèse des dimanches et des fètes* 66 (1966): 22-23, 25; Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 184; George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 116; Alfred Loisy, *L`Apocalypse de Jean* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1972), 164; Beatrice S. Neall, 245, 269-270; William S. Sailer, "Francis Bacon Among the Theologians: Aspects of Dispensational Hermeneutics," *Evangelical Journal* 6 (1988): 80-81; Kenneth A. Strand, "The 'Spotlight-On-Last-Events' Sections in the Book of Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 27 (1989): 206; and Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1917), 97. This view is rejected, for example, by Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906), 287; Balmer H. Kelly, "Revelation 7:9-17," *Interpretation* 40 (1986): 289-290; and John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 139-149. The different options are discussed by Neall, 267-272. 1
[7]. This is called an audition.
[8]. The audition and the vision describe the same person from different perspectives.
[9]. Her counterpart is found under the sixth trumpet (9:16), the demonic army of 200 million. The phrase "I heard their number" appears only twice in Rev (7:4 and 9:16) and contrasts God's army on earth with Satan□s army on earth.
[10]. For a more detailed discussion on the remnant see Ekkehardt Mueller, "The End Time Remnant in Revelation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11(2000):188-204.
[11]. However, even if the saints of Rev 13:7 are understood as God's people during the

Medieval Ages, the subsequent verse stresses that those whose names are found in the book of life do not participate in the universal eschatological worship of the beast in verse 10 they are called "saints," and these are clearly the remnant.
[12]. Dan 7:18, 21, 22, 25, 27.
[113]. An exhaustive discussion on the question of translating this text with a subjective genitive or an objective genitive can be found in an article by Gerhard Pfandl, "The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy", in *Symposium on Revelation - Book II*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, Volume 7, edited by Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 295-333. On pages 321-322 he summarizes important results:
(1) In the New Testament the term *maturia* (testimony) is mainly used by John.
(2) Outside of the Book of Revelation *maturia* used in a genitive construction is always a subjective genitive.
(3) In the Apocalypse all references to *maturia* can be interpreted as a subjective genitive.
(4) The parallelism in 1:2, 9 and 20:4 between "the word of God" and the "testimony of Jesus" makes it evident that the "testimony of Jesus" is the testimony that Jesus Himself gives just as the "word of God" is the word that God speaks. This applies also to the parallelism in 12:17 between the "commandments of God" and the "testimony of Jesus.
(5) In 12:17 the remnant "have" the "testimony of Jesus" This does not fit to the idea of giving testimony about Jesus.
(6) The context of the New Testament makes it necessary to view the content of the "testimony of Jesus" as Jesus Himself. The testimony of Jesus is Christ's self-revelation through the prophets. It is His testimony, not the believer's testimony about Him.
(7) The parallelism between 19:10 and 22:8-9 indicates that the one who has the "testimony of Jesus" has the gift of prophecy. The "testimony of Jesus" is the Holy Spirit, who inspires the prophets.
Therefore the remnant as a group has, according to 12:17, the gift of prophecy. Cf. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 72, and Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, revised ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eeerdmanns, 1998), 242. Seventh-day Adventists, therefore, apply the phrase "spirit of prophecy" (as a synonym for "testimony of Jesus") also but not exclusively to the ministry of E. G. White.
[14]. In this case, it is an objective genitive. Cf. R. H. Charles,1:369; Mounce, 277; Pfandl, 322.
[15]. Cf. Hubert Ritt, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, Die Neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1988), 74. He summarizes the characteristics of the 144,000 in four points.
1[16]. Cf. Johnson, 36-39. He doesn't specifically talk about the remnant, calling it Go□s people instead, but he describes God□s people in Rev 14:1-12 in 10 points.
1[17]. Levi was set apart and was not counted with the other tribes. Joseph was split in Ephraim and Manasses, thus allowing for twelve tribes apart from Levi.
[18]. Actually, an inclusion is found in Rev 7:5-8. Twelve tribes are enumerated, but the

participle "sealed" appears only with the 12,000 persons from the first tribe, Judah, and the 12,000 persons from the last one, Benjamin. See also François Rousseau, *L'Apocalypse et le milieu prophétique du Nouveau Testament: Structure et préhistoire du texte* (Tournai: Desclée & Cie., 1971), 188-189.

Appendix: E. G. White and the 144,000

This appendix contains different Ellen G. White quotations on the 144,000 found in her writings. Most of them occur in more than one book and/or articles, however, only one source will be indicated in the following compilation. We will first list these quotations and then comment on them briefly.

1. Statements Reflecting Biblical Passages

"The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake." "The 144,000 were all sealed, and perfectly united." EW 15

"Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted 'Alleluia!'as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air." EW 16

"Here on the sea of glass the 144,000 stood in a perfect square." EW 16

"And as we were about to enter the holy temple, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, 'Only the 144,000 enter this place,' and we shouted, 'Alleluia.'" 1T 68

"A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob's trouble. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the voice of God. The 144,000 triumphed. Their faces were lighted up with the glory of God." EW 36-37

"*The 144,000.* They sing 'a new song' before the throne, a song which no man can learn save the hundred and forty and four thousand. It is the song of Moses and the Lamb—a song of deliverance. None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song, for it is the song of their experience—an experience such as no other company have ever had. 'These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.' These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as 'the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb' (Rev. 15:2, 3; 14:1-5.) 'These are they which came out of great tribulation'; they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob's trouble; they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God's judgments." GC 648-649 (1911).

"*The 144,000 Without Guile.*—One of the marked features in the representation of the 144,000 is that in their mouth there was found no guile. The Lord has said, 'Blessed is the man . . . in whose spirit there is no guile.' They profess to be children of God, and

are represented as following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They are prefigured before us as standing on Mount Zion, girt for holy service, clothed in white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints. But all who follow the Lamb in heaven will first have followed Him on earth, in trustful, loving, willing obedience, followed Him not fretfully and capriciously, but confidently, truthfully, as the flock follows the shepherd. . . ." 3SM 424

"*Strive to Be Among the 144,000*. —[Rev. 7:9-17 quoted.] Those whom the Lamb will lead by the fountains of living waters, and from whose eyes He will wipe away all tears, will be those now receiving the knowledge and understanding revealed in the Bible, the Word of God. . . . Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand (RH March 9, 1905)." 7BC 970

"*The Signet of Heaven*.—John saw a Lamb on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000 having His Father's name written in their foreheads. They bore the signet of heaven. They reflected the image of God. They were full of the light and the glory of the Holy One. If we would have the image and superscription of God upon us, we must separate ourselves from all iniquity. We must forsake every evil way, and then we must trust our cases in the hands of Christ. While we are working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, God will work in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure (RH March 19, 1889)." 7BC 978

Ellen White affirms that the 144,000 are those that are alive at Jesus' Second Coming. They have been sealed and went through the great tribulation. Thus, Ellen White seems to confirm that the 144,000 and the great multitude are the same group. She also calls them "saints" which remind us of Rev 13 and 14. According to her the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb mentioned in Rev 15:3-4 are the song of the 144,000. This is the new song of Rev 14:3, which, however, is not recorded in that chapter. The characteristics of the 144,000 found in Rev are also attributed to them by Ellen White.

2. Statements Opposing False Ideas about the 144,000

"Bro. Arnold held that the 1000 years of Rev. xx were in the past; and that the 144,000 were those raised at Christ's resurrection." 2SG 98

Ellen G. White wrote a letter to a certain brother, who held: ". . . that the 144,000 will be Jews who will acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah." She responded saying among others things: "We must beware lest, under cover of searching for new truth, Satan shall divert our minds from Christ and the special truths for this time. I have been shown that it is the device of the enemy to lead minds to dwell upon some obscure or unimportant point, something that is not fully revealed or is not essential to our salvation. This is made the absorbing theme, the 'present truth,' when all their investigations and suppositions only serve to make matters more obscure than before, and to confuse the minds of some who ought to be seeking for oneness through sanctification of the truth. Your ideas of the two subjects you mention do not harmonize with the light which God has given me." 14MR

Not only did Ellen White support the biblical teaching of the 144,000. She also opposed erroneous views. As we have seen the 144,000 are those who are alive when

Jesus returns. By challenging a kind of literal understanding of the 144,000 she supported the symbolical interpretation pointing out that we should not transform side-issues into essential doctrines.

3. Statements concerning Those Who Belong or Do Not Belong to the 144,000

"Then the angel said, 'You must go back, and if you are faithful, you, with the 144,000, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God." EW 40

"I saw that she [referring to Mrs. Hastings, a wife and mother, who had passed away] was sealed and would come up at the voice of God and stand upon the earth, and would be with the 144,000." 2SM 263

"It is not His will that they shall get into controversy over questions which will not help them spiritually, such as, Who is to compose the hundred and forty-four thousand? This those who are the elect of God will in a short time know without question." 1SM 174 (1901).

"*When There Was No Light:* I have no light on the subject [as to just who would constitute the 144,000]. . . ." 3SM 51

The first two quotations do not claim that Ellen White or Mrs. Hastings belong to the 144,000. Both of them are seen with the 144.000. This does, however, not imply that they are part of them. Again we are admonished to be content with what we can know about the 144,000 and not to press the issue.

4. Other Statements on the 144,000

"I saw there tables of stone in which the names of the 144,000 were engraved in letters of gold." 1T 68

"Why were they [the 144,000] so specially singled out? Because they had to stand with a wonderful truth right before the whole world, and receive their opposition and while receiving this opposition they were to remember that they were sons and daughters of God that they must have Christ formed within them the hope of glory. They were ever keeping in view the great and blessed hope that is before them." 1SAT 72-73

It seems that with the second statement Ellen White associates the 144,000 with the three angels messages. They have accepted that □wonderful truth□ and present it.

Summary

Obviously, E. G. White did not make many definite statements about the 144,000. Therefore, we should be careful not to read into her statements, what she did not say. Apparently, she opted for a symbolic understanding of the 144,000, who would be living at the Second Coming of Christ and seems to have described the great tribulation as the experience of the 144,000. Most important may be her warnings not to become preoccupied with details that are not important and not to try to interpret what cannot be determined, but rather live one’s life in such a way that one may be counted among them.